



850 Ridge Avenue
Suite 301
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
Office: (412) 321-8440
Fax: (412) 321-4088

The following is the result of the Hofstra University (Hofstra) on field protest of their 1:00 pm game on 10/25/14 against Drexel University (Drexel). This was the second game of the double header.

Game protested by Hofstra for an umpire's decision in violation of NCBA rules. This was an on field protest which by NCBA rule 24.02.1 states "On Field Protests consists of protests regarding Uniform Violations, Equipment Violations, **Umpire decisions believed to be in violation of NCBA rules**, Umpire Qualifications and all Roster Violations."

Requested Action: Continuation of Game from point of Protest.

Protest:

Hofstra is protesting their 1:00 pm game on 10/25/14 against Drexel, requesting a continuation of game from the point of protest. Hofstra believes that the home plate umpire's decision was in violation of NCBA Rule 19.02.1.2 and 19.02.1.2.1

19.02.1.2 If the defensive player blocks the base (plate) or base line clearly without possession of the ball, obstruction shall be called. The umpire shall point and call, "That's obstruction." The umpire shall let the play continue until all play has ceased, call time and award any bases that are justified in Rule 2. The obstructed runner is awarded at least one base beyond the base last touched legally before the obstruction.

19.02.1.2.1 If the base runner collides flagrantly, the runner shall be declared safe on the obstruction, but will be ejected from the contest. The ball is dead.

The final score of the game was in favor of Drexel 3-2. At the time of the protest, it was the 5th inning with the score tied 2-2, meaning the protested play would have put Hofstra in the lead, 3-2.

Investigation:

Hofstra submitted an on-field protest and followed the correct protocol. In the protest form that was submitted, Hofstra described the situation as to why they submitted the protest.

"PROTEST IS BASED ON SITUATION WHERE HOFSTRA RUNNER ATTEMPTING TO CROSS PLATE IS BLOCKED BY THE CATCHER IN FRONT OF PLATE LEAVING NO LANE TO SLIDE IN - CATCHER DID NOT HAVE BALL AND UMPIRE RULES THAT RUNNER MADE FLAGRANT CONTACT WITH CATCHER AND EJECTS RUNNER AND ALSO CALLS HIM OUT AT PLATE EVEN THOUGH CATCHER RUNNER WAS SAFE AS CATCHER NEVER WAS ABLE TO APPLY A TAG ON THE PLAY. FURTHERMORE THE CATCHER NOT ONLY BLOCKED THE PLATE PREVENTING THE RUNNER ANY ABILITY TO SLIDE WITHOUT SERIOUS INJURY, WHEN THE RUNNER TRIES TO GET TO THE PLATE THE CATCHER OBTRUCTED THE RUNNER WHILE TRYING TO REACH FOR THE BASEBALL. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND THE DECISION BY THE PLATE UMPIRE TO RULE FLAGRANT CONTACT IS IN HIS DISCRETION (WHICH FOR THE RECORD WE ARE IN DISAGREEMENT WITH) THE UMPIRE WAS UNAWARE OF NCBA RULE WHERE EVEN IF THE RUNNER IS EJECTED FOR FLAGRANT CONTACT THE RUN STILL SCORES AND THE RUNNER IS RULED SAFE IF HE WAS SAFE. WE SHOWED THIS RULE TO THE UMPIRE ON THE FIELD AND HE WAS UNABLE TO VERIFY IF WE WERE SHOWING HIM THE MOST CURRENT RULE BOOK. HE SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF THE RULE WHERE THE PLAYER IS CALLED SAFE AS HE WAS MOST FAMILIAR WITH NCAA RULES AND NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE NCBA RULE DIFFERENCE. HE FURTHER STATED THAT PLACING THE GAME UNDER PROTEST WAS THE RIGHT CALL AND IF THE RULE BOOK WE SHOWED HIM WAS THE MOST UP TO DATE RULE BOOK THEN WE SHOULD WIN THE PROTEST."

After the protest was submitted, North Atlantic Regional Director, Mitch Conner reached out to Drexel's president Cameron Goodell, who also happened to be the catcher in the game to get his description of the situation. His response is detailed below.

"So what happened was there was a base hit to left field and a runner was trying to score from second. You are correct in that I was behind the plate. The throw came in from left field and honestly, if the runner had gone around me and slid to the far right, kind of like a hook slide, I would have had no shot to tag him out because the ball was getting to home plate at the same time as the runner. I was standing where I was because that is where the ball was coming from and to my judgment it was going to beat the runner to me so I would have been able to tag him. The ball was a couple feet up the line not directly at home so that's why he could have easily scored had he gone far right and did a type of hook slide. Instead of avoiding me he drove his shoulder and ran straight through me. I'm a pretty large guy and I went down pretty hard, which isn't an easy thing for someone to do. The ball one hopped to me and got to me at basically the same exact time that the runner ran into me so it was definitely a bang-bang play."

With the details of the situation described differently from each team, the VP of Division I Baseball Operations, Christian Smith, reached out to home plate umpire at the time of protest, Chris Williams to get his description of the situation. His response via email is listed below.

"Christian sorry I was unavailable today I was investigating a fire. I am a full time Firefighter/Fire Investigator for the City Of Vinland in New Jersey and on my days off I work for the County Fire Marshal's Office. My availability during the day is hit and miss. If it helps you, the player from Hofstra was in violation of your rule 19.02.1.1.1.2 flagrant or malicious contact by a runner before touching the plate. The runner could of avoided the collision which was approx. 6 foot from home plate with the catcher in possession of the ball, but chose to maliciously contact the catcher. The contact was made above the waist and initiated by the base runner with no attempt to reach home plate, until after the collision. If you have any further questions please feel free to email me at the above address."

He also mentioned the following:

"The catcher did have possession of the ball prior to the collision and then the ball came lose. I told the coach that when he asked me what happened. Also the contact was made above the waist this leads me to believe the runner was attempting to dislodge the ball. If the contact was below the waist I would have been convinced the runner was attempting to slide. This is the rule of thumb used by all college officials.

If the runner thought he was being obstructed he should of gave himself up and allowed me to make that call not make malicious contact with the catcher above his waist. With that being said, no I did not have obstruction on the catcher."

Ruling: Protest Denied – Hofstra was protesting rule 19.02.1.2, which is a subset rule of 19.02.1.2 which describes an NCBA rule in which obstruction is called by the umpire. As stated above by the home plate umpire, he never had obstruction called on the catcher. If Hofstra believed that obstruction *should* have been called, then that is a judgment decision that is up to the umpire and cannot be protested. From league standpoint, the description from home plate umpire shows that NCBA rules were followed.

Christian Smith
VP of Division I Baseball Operations